



News Clips
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GPS:

Overseas News

Credit card trail reveals hijackers' devices

Nicholas Wapshott in New York

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CREDIT card records of the suicide hijacker Muhammad Atta show that he was in Manhattan the day before he crashed an aircraft into the World Trade Centre.

The FBI believes that Atta, the leader of the 19 hijackers, was in New York to check the co-ordinates of the twin towers, which he then fed into a handheld electronic navigation device. It was used so that the hijackers did not have to rely on the complex navigation systems on board the hijacked jets, which they probably could not understand.

Widely available Global Positioning System (GPS) devices use satellite signals to allow drivers to pinpoint places easily and follow suggested routes. Reliance on these devices explains the unusual flight paths taken by the aircraft.

Through the records of 27 credit cards, the FBI has learnt that the four GPS devices probably used were bought from Sporty's Pilot Shop in Ohio. Atta also bought a number of flight simulator video games at the shop.

Prosecutors of Zacarias Moussaoui, who is on trial in Virginia for his alleged part in the hijackings, say that on June 25, 2000, he too visited the shop and bought a GPS receiver and flight simulation software for two types of Boeing 747s.